

The Empire under Diocletian 9

of no friction between the four
master **of** the
world.

Diocletian profoundly modified the character of the Roman Principate. He orientalised it, adopting frankly and openly the symbols and paraphernalia of royalty which had hitherto been so repugnant to the Roman temper. Hitherto the Roman Emperors had been, first and foremost, Imperators, heads of the army, soldiers in the purple. Diocletian became a King, clad in sumptuous robes, stiff with embroidery and jewels. Instead of approaching with the old military salute, those who came into his presence bent the knee and prostrated themselves in adoration. The monarch surrounded himself not with military prefects, but with chamberlains and court officials, the hierarchy of the palace, not of the camp. We cannot wholly impute this change to vanity or to that littleness of mind which he pleased with pomp and elaborate ceremonial. Diocletian was too great a man to be swayed by paltry motives. It was rather that his subjects had abdicated their old claim to be called a free people, and were ready to be slaves. The old order had been debarred by the emperor from entering the army, and had acquiesced without apparent protest in an edict which confined to its members the profession of arms. Diocletian felt that his throne would be safer by removing it from the ken of the outside world, by investing it with vulgar approach, by deepening the mystery attaching to palace ceremonial, and exalting even the simplest functions.